

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 8957

EXDIS DIST AS NODIS

BONN FOR THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, EG, IS, US
SUBJECT: CHANGE IN SADAT'S TACTICS TOWARD BEGIN

REF: CAIRO 17026

1. WE HAD REACHED THE SAME CONCLUSION ABOUT SADAT'S CHANGING TACTICS TOWARD BEGIN FROM WATCHING HIS BEHAVIOR OVER THE PAST TEN DAYS. WE HAD ALSO REGRETFULLY CONCLUDED THAT WHATEVER VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE SAID TO SADAT ON THIS SUBJECT, AND HE WAS URGED PRIVATELY BY EVERY ISRAELI LEADER WITH WHOM HE TALKED TO RAISE IT WITH SADAT, IT MUST HAVE HAD NO EFFECT.

2. I BELIEVE SADAT IS MAKING A MAJOR ERROR BY WRITING OFF BEGIN IN FAVOR OF A DECIDEDLY OBVIOUS EFFORT TO MANIPULATE ISRAELI INTERNAL POLITICS. LABOR PARTY SPOKESMEN ARE UNDOUBTEDLY EASIER TO TALK TO; HOWEVER, WERE THEY TODAY IN POWER--WITH BEGIN IN OPPOSITION--THEY WOULD HAVE A NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TASK--NOT ONLY TO
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MAKE PEACE IN A WAY THAT SADAT MIGHT ACCEPT, BUT MORE IMPORTANT TO SELL THE CONCESSIONS WHICH WOULD BE INVOLVED TO THE ISRAELI PUBLIC. AND AS FOR WEIZMAN, HE HAS NO PROSPECT OF REPLACING BEGIN AS PRIME MINISTER SO LONG AS BEGIN IS PHYSICALLY AND POLITICALLY ACTIVE. THESE MAY BE UNAPPETIZING JUDGMENTS FOR SADAT, BUT THEY ARE THE REALITY OF THE ISRAELI POLITICAL SCENE WITH WHICH

HE SHOULD BE DEALING. AND SO LONG AS THIS IS THE REALITY,
HEAVY HANDED EFFORTS TO PLAY OFF WEIZMAN AND PERES
AGAINST BEGIN AND DAYAN WILL ONLY MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT
FOR HIM TO COAX THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT INTO HIS NET.
BEGIN AND DAYAN ARE NOT ONLY WILY POLITICIANS, EACH IN
HIS OWN WAY, BUT ALSO PROUD AND SENSITIVE MEN. FOR
SADAT'S NEW TACTIC TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS WOULD
REQUIRE THAT HE EMPLOY CONSUMMATE SUBTLETY. THE RECORD
THUS FAR SUGGESTS HE IS BETTER AT SHOCK TACTICS, WHERE
HE UNQUESTIONABLY EXCELLS. BEGIN MAY BRING HIMSELF DOWN
BY HIS OWN MISTAKES, BUT SADAT'S CURRENT APPROACH IS
LIKELY TO BACKFIRE. IN THE PROCESS, I FEAR THAT PROSPECTS
FOR REACHING PEACE AGREEMENTS WILL BE SET BACK RATHER
THAN ADVANCED.
LEWIS

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NNN

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